

Lecce declaration on European Ocean Observing System



To Erik Buch (EUROGOOS Chair)

To Iain Shepherd (DG Mare)

Dear Iain and Erik,

During the last MonGOOS meeting, held in Lecce on the 26th-28th November 2014, there was an open and fruitful conversation about the future European Ocean Observing System (EOOS) and the links with EMODNET, Copernicus and the ROOSes initiatives. As a result, it was agreed to prepare this declaration to express the concern of MonGOOS community on the sustainability of the observing system that is being designed and implemented, and propose way forward.

The overall architecture of the system, with a strong MONGOOS data center providing data to EMODNET thanks to the support of Copernicus, is clear and understood as correct.

The Copernicus Mediterranean In-situ TAC was initially designed to provide assistance for the management of data in real time for the Monitoring and Forecasting Center activities, but the existence of MONGOOS data center (<http://oceanobs.mongoos.eu>), based on the data collected by the TAC, is actually expanding the spectrum of its applications. EMODnet has, from the beginning, the wider scope of making the data available for re-use to the overall European and International community. EMODnet strongly relies on in-situ TAC data collection. These two activities should therefore find a complementary and efficient way to collaborate.

There is a consensus on the fact that that EOOS will rely mainly on the contributions from the different institutions deploying and maintaining the operational systems (buoys, tide gauges, etc.). The budget allocated by these institutions to maintain the instruments is two orders of magnitude larger than the present EMODNET-Physics cost. In spite of this, the design of the system is focusing only on data distribution at European level and is being done taken as granted the maintained contribution of the national institutions.

This is a risky assumption due to several reasons: first, the experience from recent years, with instruments being retrieved from the water at Greece, Italy, Spain and other countries, demonstrates the fragility of the system without additional support from Europe. Second, the link with the MONGOOS Data Center and EMODMET is not guaranteed with the present architecture. It is true that visibility is today a motivation to make this data available, but it is a weak commitment. Last, but not least, the tendency on the administrations today to reduce personnel is seriously jeopardizing the quality of the time series, because valuable professionals are retiring and there is no way to retain their expertise into the system.

Additionally, and on top of that, the Mediterranean Sea is already severely under-sampled, especially along the African coast.

The combination of all these facts shows that a road map with a clear architecture to distribute information and products that Europe has simply not granted, in the best case.

Therefore we believe that additional support from Europe should be provided to the institutions that are actually generating the data, in order to ensure the basis of all the production chain and build EOOS on solid pillars for the re-use and the blue growth applications.

Due to the huge costs of deploying and maintaining instrumentation at sea, it is not realistic to think in moving these expenses from national institution to EU funds. Nevertheless, an efficient support could be provided by Europe for the reinforcement of the personnel in charge of the data production and management. This investment, perfectly affordable, could produce the following benefits:

- A EU program supporting data generators will increase the know-how of the member States and the capabilities of their teams, boosting the quality of the time series that are feeding the system;
- The operational integration of data MonGOOS Data Center, MyOcean In situ Tac and EMODNET will be more sustainable thanks to the work of well trained personnel on the national institutions;
- The benefits derived from a permanent EU support will represent a continuous motivation to contribute to the systems;
- Administrations could be able to maintain the expertise of the personnel that is retiring, avoiding therefore an invaluable loss of knowledge;

A possible way to implement this strategy is via EMODNET, increasing the budget and working directly with the MONGOOS data producers. Newly formed EuroGOOS Task Teams on the different observing platforms could have also an important role, if properly funded.

In any case, it is our obligation to warn about this situation and offer our collaboration and support to make this message reach the proper decision making spheres.

Best Regards

Giovanni Coppini and Enrique Alvarez Fanjul

MonGOOS Co-chairs.